About LEVEL news

Contents

Wet Weather Slows Decline of Middle Lakes Levels

High Lake Superior Outflow Speeds Up Water Level Decline

Low Lake St. Lawrence Levels

Lake St. Louis and Montreal Levels Ideal

Severe Storm Envelops Great Lakes

October Precipitation

Water Levels for the Great Lakes and Montreal Harbour ... *a monthly bulletin from Canadian Hydrographic Service*

About the monthly Water Level bulletin

October Precipitation Over the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term October average:

Great Lakes Basin	119%
Lake Erie (including Lake St. Clair)	120%
Lake Superior	143%
Lakes Michigan-	107%

LEVEL news

Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Water Levels

Volume 4, Number 11 **November 7, 1996**

Risk of Damage to Shore Properties

Wet Weather Slows Decline of Middle Lakes Levels

Lingering effects of a very wet September has slowed the seasonal decline of levels on the middle Great Lakes.

While rainfall amounts during October were relatively close to average, runoff to the lakes was higher than average due to the high levels of inland lakes and rivers and wet soil conditions. As a result of this high inflow, combined with record high inflow from Lake Superior (see article below), Lakes Michigan-Huron declined by a very small amount during October and remained 37 cm above average at the start of November. Lakes St. Clair and Erie had slightly larger drops in their levels, but both remained 40 cm above average.

If wet conditions should continue, the levels of these lakes will remain relatively close to their present level over the next three months. Drier conditions over that period could result in a decline of up to 20 cm in the levels of these lakes.

With the fall storm season upon us and lake levels significantly above average, there is a moderate risk of damage to shore properties during severe storms. This risk will continue until ice forms a protective barrier along the shore.

High Lake Superior Outflow Speeds Up Water Level Decline

Very high flows in the St. Marys River during October helped to decrease Lake Superior's level by more than otherwise would have occurred during the month.

Completion of repairs on September 20 at the Compensating Works in the St. Marys River enabled all gates at the dam to be opened. This, along with flows through the three hydroelectric plants, resulted in a total river flow of about 3700 m3/s, a record high for October.

Repairs to the dam this summer had led to Lake Superior outflows less than

Huron
Lake Ontario 117%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

Last Issue

Next Issue

Issue Index

Summary information for "LEVEL*news*"

the amounts specified by the regulation plan. As a result, 5 cm of water was retained on Lake Superior by the end of August while the levels of Lakes Michigan-Huron were lowered by 3 cm. These effects are currently being offset by higher outflows, and should be completely eliminated by mid-November.

The high flows in the St. Marys River following the opening of all 16 gates caused a rise in the river levels below Sault. Ste. Marie. There were concerns expressed by downstream property owners. However, river levels have improved somewhat since late September.

The International Lake Superior Board of Control informed that, beginning December, the winter gate open setting will take effect with one-half gate open in the main rapids and one-half gate open at the fishery remedial dike. All other gates will be closed gradually in November to avoid large flow fluctuations in the river.

At the beginning of November, Lake Superior's level was 21 cm higher than average. Wetter than average conditions over the lake's drainage basin during October prevented a larger decline in the lake's level. The level is expected to continue to decline the rest of this year.

Low Lake St. Lawrence Levels

High flows over the past two months at the Moses-Saunders power dam at Cornwall has led to extremely low levels above the dam on Lake St. Lawrence. The low levels have been a concern to navigation and to recreational boaters who were taking their boats out of the water for the winter. The low level problem was aggravated on several occasions by strong easterly winds. Occasionally, flows at the power dam have been temporarily reduced to avoid excessively low levels above the dam.

The water level of Lake Ontario had just about returned to average at the end of August when abundant rain arrived, brought on first by Hurricane Fran in early September and later on by other weather systems. In response to the high water supplies to Lake Ontario, the regulation plan has specified high outflows. This has helped to lower Lake Ontario's level, but created this problem on Lake St. Lawrence.

Lake Ontario's level remained 13 cm above average at the start of November.

Lake St. Louis and Montreal Levels Ideal

Except in April and May, when snow melt in the Ottawa River basin posed a threat of flooding, water levels in the St. Lawrence River below Cornwall have been close to ideal for the past several months. Sufficiently high levels in the spring provided favourable levels for fish spawning, while recreational boating and commercial navigation enjoyed levels at or slightly above average during the summer and early fall months.

High flows from Lake Ontario and the Ottawa River are expected to maintain levels at Montreal well above chart datum in November.

Severe Storm Envelops Great Lakes

Strong westerly winds accompanied a severe storm that affected all of the Great Lakes on October 30.

Wave heights of over 6 metres were reported on Lake Superior, while steady winds of 95 kilometres per hour and gusts of 110 kilometres per hour occurred at Port Colborne on Lake Erie. The strong winds created a surge in Lake Erie's level of 150 cm at Port Colborne.

Preliminary reports indicated that some localized flooding over roads and parks occurred at the eastern end of Lake Erie.

Top of Page
Français | Contact Us | Help | Search | Canada Site
What's New | Topics | Publications | Weather | Home | About Us

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